United Nations

Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council, in two Presidential statements last night, demands immediate release of two hostages taken by Bosnian Serb forces on Monday while under UNPROFOR protection, and demands that all parties refrain from any action threatening safety and well-being of civilians in Central Bosnia.

+ Secretary-General, in address to African-American Institute, expresses great concern about marginalization of Africa; despite progress, outlook for Somalia is uncertain because political will of Somalis and of international community is unclear.

+ United Nations launches Inter-Agency Humanitarian Appeal for Afghanistan in Islamabad, Geneva and New York; seeks $60 million for programmes and projects until March 1994.

+ Special Commission says Iraq has yet to meet conditions for initiation in full of plan for monitoring and verification of weapons facilities; however, sees signs that country might be willing to formally acknowledge obligations imposed by Security Council.

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The Security Council last night demanded that the two hostages taken by Bosnian Serb forces on Monday be released immediately. The two escorts were accompanying a peace mission to the city of Vares headed by Monsignor Vinko Puljic, the Archbishop of Sarajevo, and under the protection of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR). In a statement made by its President, José Luis Jesus (Cape Verde), the Council condemned the "outrageous act" as a "flagrant challenge to the authority and inviolability of UNPROFOR". It reminded the perpetrators that they were obligated to ensure the safety of the hostages and would be held personally accountable for their actions.

The Council asked the Secretary-General to investigate the incident thoroughly and to report to it without delay. It also urged all parties to refrain from any action which might exacerbate the situation.

(more)

For information media—not an official record

In another Presidential statement made last night, the Council demanded that all concerned parties refrain from taking any action that would threaten the safety and well-being of the civilian population in Central Bosnia. Expressing concern at the deterioration of the situation in the region and the overall humanitarian situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Council reiterated its demand for a guarantee of unimpeded access for humanitarian assistance. It also called on all parties to assist the competent United Nations agencies and other humanitarian organizations in providing relief to the affected civilian population in those countries.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said last night that the marginalization of Africa was of the utmost concern to him. Addressing the African-American Institute in New York, which awarded him the Arthur A. Houghton Jr. Star Crystal Award for Excellence, he said that if the continent did not show a clear determination to solve its problems, the international community would sharply reduce its support. Many problems could be solved through bilateral action, or by those directly affected, but problems which could not be solved in that way, and which threatened fundamental international principles or interests, should be dealt with multilaterally -- by the United Nations.

In Somalia, international action had been the only way to prevent hundreds of thousands of deaths and to save the State, the Secretary-General said. The United Nations was now implementing a $166 million Programme for the Relief and Rehabilitation of Somalia and peace and reconstruction were genuinely taking place beyond the spotlight now focused on south Mogadishu. However, despite tremendous progress, the outlook was very uncertain because it was not clear that Somalis had the political will to seize the opportunity before them, or that the international community had the political will to persevere there.

Economically, there was donor fatigue and a declining enthusiasm for assisting Africa, while politically, there was a growing reluctance to sustain recent peace-keeping commitments, the Secretary-General said. The achievements of the international operation in Somalia had come at a very high price in human terms and in financial terms -- hundreds of Somalis and 95 United Nations personnel had been killed and more than $2 billion had already been spent on the country. The international effort in Somalia demonstrated that peace could not be imposed from outside, and could not be achieved without sufficient political will, he concluded.

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A United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for Humanitarian Assistance for Afghanistan was launched today in Islamabad, Geneva and New York. The Appeal calls for $59.8 million to cover life-sustaining humanitarian programmes and emergency rehabilitation projects until March 1994.

(more)

Two million refugees have returned to Afghanstan since April, and they and others displaced by the continuing fighting in parts of the country will have to rely on international support for survival. The previous appeal for the country, which covered humanitarian programmes for the first nine months of this year, raised $47 million.

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The Special Commission on the disarmament of Iraq has said that while the country has been moving recently "in a positive direction", it has yet to meet the conditions for initiation in full of the Commission's plan for ongoing monitoring and verification of its weapons-related facilities. However, the Commission noted, there were signs that Iraq might be willing to formally acknowledge its obligations under Security Council resolution 715 (1991), which approved the implementation of the plan submitted by the Secretary-General. Those observations were contained in a report by the Commission, which the Secretary-General transmitted to the Council in a note dated 5 November.

The Commission said Iraq's the failure to acknowledge resolution 715 (1991) had prevented monitoring and verification of dual-capability facilities in the country and imports into it. Thus, the Commission could not ensure that Iraq did not reactivate its proscribed weapons programmes. Iraq's acknowledgement of its responsibilities was an important prerequisite for any favourable assessment of its fulfilment of the obligations imposed by resolution 687 (1991), which established the cease-fire after the Gulf War, and other relevant resolutions. It would also be a significant step towards the goal of creating a zone free from weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, the Commission stressed.

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